

Focusing on the Senior Pedestrian

In 1994, pedestrian crashes took the lives of 1,249 senior adults, ages 65 and older. That year, 6,850 older adults were also injured as pedestrians.

The risk of dying in a pedestrian crash increases with age. Pedestrians, ages 65 and older, are two to eight times more likely to die than younger people when struck by motor vehicles. This is partly because older people are often less physically resilient. Approximately 15 percent of pedestrians 65 and older die after being hit by a motor vehicle.

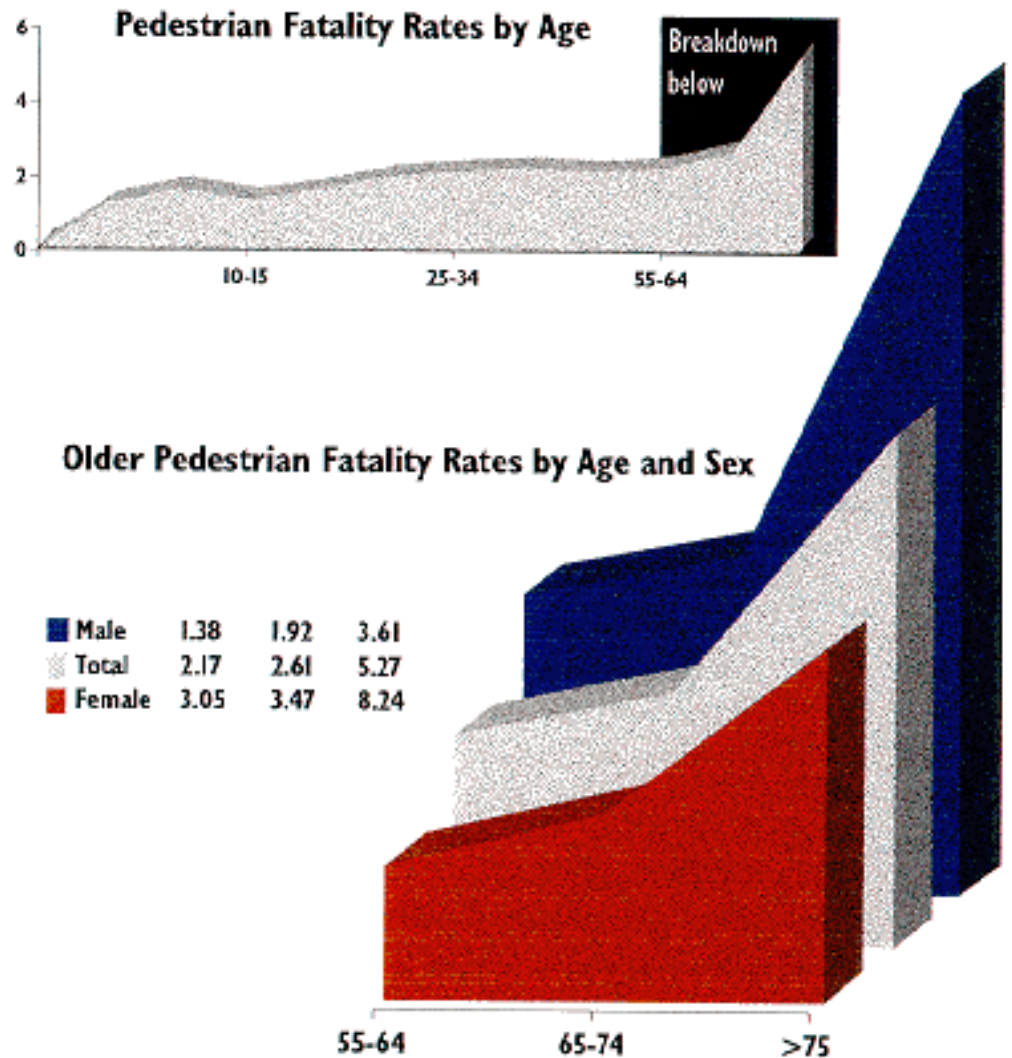
Population shifts indicate that this is a growing problem. Currently older pedestrians comprise 23 percent of all pedestrian fatalities while representing only 13 percent of the total U.S. population. Older adults are projected to account for 17 percent of the U.S. population by the year 2020. If the current injury and fatality rates remain the same, the current annual count of 9,000 elderly pedestrians injured and killed will increase to more than 16,000 by 2020.

Older pedestrians, compared to other age groups, face higher crash and fatality rates at intersections, while walking near backing vehicles and during winter months in general, due in part to lowered visibility.

Something Can Be Done

Senior pedestrians can help by making themselves more visible, making eye-contact with drivers and being alert for backing vehicles and parked cars that may be about to move. Law enforcement agencies can be encouraged to enforce speed limits in pedestrian zones and to ensure that right-turning drivers yield to pedestrians. Community improvements include: the addition of sidewalks and walkways; lengthened traffic walk signals in areas where older people live and walk; raised medians and curb cuts for wide streets; and the removal of ice and snow from sidewalks during winter months.

1994 Pedestrian Fatality Rates (per 100,000 population)



Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration